

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Finance and Planning
Tuesday, June 10, 2008
2:15 – 3:45
510 Morrill Hall

Present: Judith Martin (chair), Rose Blixt, Adam Faitek, Steve Fitzgerald, Thomas Klein, Joseph Konstan, Kathleen O'Brien, Terry Roe, Michael Rollefson, Gwen Rudney, Aks Zaheer

Absent: Jon Binks, David Chapman, V. V. Chari, Ruonan Ding, Lincoln Kallsen, Russell Luepker, Mikael Moseley, Richard Pfutzenreuter, Justin Revenaugh, Thomas Stinson, Michael Volna, Warren Warwick, George Wilcox

Guests: Associate Vice President Robert Kvavik, Orlyn Miller (Director of Planning), Ray Voelker (Office of Space Management)

[In these minutes: (1) issues pending; (2) student study space; (3) light-rail transit]

1. Issues Pending

Professor Martin convened the meeting at 2:15 and asked Committee members to comment on the list of issues pending before the Committee. A number of suggestions were made.

-- To the item "a discussion of the enterprise model for future AHC expansion," the Committee should hold a companion discussion with the Provost about the rest of the University and the balance between the AHC and the rest; no one but the Provost is looking at expansion in the rest of the University.

-- Is it necessary to receive an annual report on parking, since nothing the Committee says has any effect? The discussion gets into the minutes, and people complain about why parking is paying for sidewalks and the like.

-- As a general approach, the Committee would prefer to receive any "slide shows" in advance and that presenters not take the entire time allotted to them; Committee members often have questions but no time to ask them. (The Committee did ask Parking and Transportation this year to do some modeling; the Committee should discuss with Vice President O'Brien items that could be explored further.)"

-- There should be a discussion about the use of faculty expertise in support operations. There are faculty who know about them but instead the University hires outside consultants; is that because faculty shut their doors to helping? (The faculty were used in the Twin Cities campus master-planning process, rather than outside consultants; if the Committee could identify a list of issues, it could ask for the research on them.) One difference is that an administrator can tell a consultant what to do; that is not quite as easy with faculty members.

-- It was agreed the Committee should ask Associate Vice President Kvavik about this item on the list: "Database/information system about opportunity costs of resources in one college, and within colleges."

* These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

- The Committee should receive an annual update on UMORE Park.
- One of the items on this list is "What should the University's financial strategy be for faculty? Endowed chairs for X% of the faculty to provide a funding base? Build up young talent and keep replacing them as they leave, or build a package of benefits so they stay? Strike pre-emptively?" There should be a general discussion of support strategy and staff as well as models for enhancing faculty creativity and initiative, something that could get to the fact that efficiency is not the only model. Efficiency implies predictability; what the University wants is creativity.
- The Committee should look at the financial gains from college reorganization: were they consistent with expectations? The Committee should also receive an update on the reorganizations.
- Is there a process by which the faculty at large can express views on what the Committee should take up with the administration? It was agreed that the agenda for the year should be distributed to faculty, P&A staff, and Civil Service staff, and their reactions sought.
- What are the results from, and the implications of, the University's living-wage policy? What has been outsourced and what is not being done effectively? Have there been jobs lost? There may not be a lot of information readily available, but the Committee could have a thoughtful discussion.
- The \$2500 capital-equipment threshold should be revisited; other institutions have higher rates; the University is wasting a lot of time on inventory tracking and it leads to perverse incentives; they should be treated as supplies (and the University is not receiving overhead on the items).
- There should be an annual joint meeting with the Senate Research Committee.
- The Committee will hear how the budget model advantages or disadvantages colleges; holding colleges financially harmless (neutral) when the change was made meant that a lot of legacy decisions were not reviewed.

Professor Martin said she would share the President's response to the recommendations of the budget-model subcommittee that were forwarded by the Senate.

2. Student Study Spaces

Professor Martin next welcomed Associate Vice President Kvavik, Vice Provost Robert McMaster, and Mr. Miller to discuss student study spaces.

Vice Provost McMaster began by noting that there was a report last spring from a group co-chaired by Professor Mark Pharis and Margaret Towle (Director of Student Unions) that included an inventory of spaces that could be used more effectively for students; the report also identified a set of 14 principles to guide the use of such space. The report was made to Vice Provost Swan/him as well as Vice Provost Gerald Rinehart. The principles addressed such topics as comfort, inviting and clean spaces, climate control, mobile technology, adjacency to health food/snack/beverage options, and so on.

One recommendation in the report is that his office be responsible for student study space on the Twin Cities campus; at present, no single entity is responsible for it (Facilities Management has some responsibility, the colleges have some, and a space group has some). The recommendation is to consolidate responsibility in one office, which would mean this his office would identify and maintain such spaces, Dr. McMaster said.

The question is who would maintain and monitor the space. His office itself cannot carry out the responsibility, but the Office of Classroom Management (OCM), responsible for classrooms, could take on the responsibility so long as there are funds provided to do the necessary work (which would require new funding). Professor Roe inquired if designing and managing the space would include tables, facilities, lighting, drink machines, and so on. It would, Dr. McMaster said. Professor Roe asked if they had any rough idea of the budget—presumably, Professor Martin added, more than is allocated now. There is no money available now, Dr. Kvavik said.

This issue first came up when Richard Sauer was interim president of the University (1988-89), Dr. Kvavik related. Students protested a reduction in library hours and complained there was no study space. One of the staff responsible for space looked at study space and said there was enough compared to what other Big Ten universities had, but that students could not find it, women did not feel safe in some of the spaces, and it was not configured in a way that students needed. Emory University spent a lot of time identifying how students work and configured their space to match the needs. The challenge for Mr. Fitzgerald (Director of OCM) is to think about the environments students want, which is not just study space but also interactive space. It is a matter of culture more than just study space, Professor Roe agreed.

Professor Konstan agreed that having someone responsible is a good idea. He said there are three different kinds of expertise involved: OCM, which is expert on functional instructional space; the libraries (pull out the laptop and there's the library, and libraries are evolving fast); and there is the unions, experts on social space. Did the committee look at who would be best at managing the study space? Not in that way, Dr. McMaster said, but the libraries were represented on the committee and did not want responsibility for study space. Mr. Fitzgerald said that OCM has demonstrated the ability to take economies of scale and provide effective management; the problem with informal study space is that it is all over the place and very diverse, but the methods used by OCM could help deliver the same kind of results that it has in the classrooms.

Is OCM willing to take on the task if there is adequate funding, Professor Martin asked? Mr. Fitzgerald said they were reluctant at first because they have made gains in classroom improvements and do not want to see funds diverted to study space, but they have been reassured because there is recognition of the need for appropriate funding. In addition to the need for resources, the University community has been imprecise in its application of use and function codes; whoever takes on the responsibility must start by doing an inventory and clarifying what subset of currently-labeled study, and lounge and public spaces, should be specifically designated and managed by the administration as informal study space. There is a need to focus the dollars to give students the best bang for the buck. And connect the spaces to classrooms, Dr. Kvavik added; as students exit classrooms, the University has an interest in creating study space in the proximity of the classrooms for convenience.

Centralization and efficiency scare him, Professor Konstan said, but they are better than neglect. Despite OCM's best efforts, there are still some terrible classrooms. He said there are some niches where he wished the University had the infrastructure to allow local decisions and to let students help decide (which could occur through OCM). He said he hoped that study spaces would not lose their character and chase students off campus. Mr. Miller agreed that standardization could be overdone but that it does help with maintenance. He agreed that local faculty, staff, and students could be involved in the decisions.

Professor Martin commented that the University should have learned from the Science Teaching and Student Services facility that it is necessary to talk to users before things get too far down the path.

Variety is important, Professor Roe said, and it is important to see what students are doing now. Some may need to talk; others may need quiet space. They did that, Dr. Kvavik said, and commented that centralization need not conflict with consulting—but they need to do something. Right now it is a case of rich and poor: some students have great space while others have ratty space, and that is not acceptable.

How will the recommendations be implemented, Mr. Faitek asked? A lot of them involve issues of quality, Mr. Fitzgerald said. OCM will use the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee and other contacts with students to understand student preferences and needs about furnishings and the like. OCM is already reviewing recent innovations and solutions in study spaces nationally. Innovative solutions might be made and he has proposed various projects to Vice Provost McMaster. Dr. McMaster mentioned some of the projects that are being considered. In one proposal, Williamson 150 will have 140 flexible individual and small group study seats and they would re-open The Cup, the small food and beverage counter in the building adjacent to the proposed study area (about \$317,000). The concourse in Willey Hall will have individual and group study spaces (about \$270,000). They have no funds now so they need to identify a source. He and Vice Provost Rinehart are willing to put some money into the projects. He agreed it is a great idea to ask students what they would use, and there could be a difference in needs between, for example, Willey Hall and space in Electrical Engineering. It is necessary to understand traffic patterns, Dr. Kvavik said; will students go to Williamson Hall? Study space cannot simply be space that is not otherwise being used. Dr. McMaster agreed but observed that there are not a lot of spaces available.

Mr. Voelker said there are competing needs for all the space that has been identified. The committee recommended taking care of the space that exists and did not recommend adding more, so he was surprised at the suggestions for additional space. There are other claims on the Williamson space, he pointed out. Dr. McMaster agreed but said that most of the money would be for furniture, which can be moved. Mr. Fitzgerald said that the committee report did recommend investigating how additional student study space might be acquired in existing facilities, and that Williamson space is the only new space in the current proposals. The current proposal uses de-mountable/flexible walls so that Williamson could be reprogrammed in the future as swing space if needed. Williamson would be good space for the thousands of students on the East Bank and the nearby Folwell and Nicholson buildings, he noted. Mr. Voelker said that Nolte, Northrop, and Pillsbury also offered possibilities.

Dr. Kvavik asked if there is any evidence that seating for 200 is better than smaller spaces.

Given the budget model, Professor Konstan said, any plan should create incentives for colleges to take on some of the responsibility for this space. They have the responsibility to get students and tuition, and there may be differences among colleges in what spaces they need. It will be necessary to get all spaces up to some minimum standard and there may be a need for central dollar matches with the colleges to meet the needs of students. He said he worried about 200+ spaces and would prefer to see more 20-student spaces.

Ms. Blixt asked who decides the priorities. That's not even on the table yet, Dr. Kvavik said, but someone must step up to the plate. He recalled arguing in the past about the need to improve classrooms because the University would not be able to recruit students with shabby classrooms. Dr. McMaster may need to make the argument about why these spaces are desirable for learning and community. If there is a good case to be made, the proposals will get into the budget hearings and will be funded. Mr. Fitzgerald said would prefer not to get into that question now because he believes they could improve the student study/ informal learning environment for a relatively few dollars. An Educational Policy Committee report in 1997 identified the same problems, and there has been discussion of the issue every so often. The problem can be talked to death, but now there is a consensus building and student study space needs a champion, someone who can fix the problem so students are better off.

Professor Konstan asked if the peak times for demand on study space are the same as for classrooms. They are not, Mr. Fitzgerald said, and are almost inverse: the greatest demand for classrooms is 9:00 – 2:00 while the demand for study space goes into the evening.

What about dual-use space, Professor Konstan asked? Use classrooms for study space and vice-versa; there could be synergies and economies of scale. One function of general classrooms is that they are study space when not being used for classes, Mr. Fitzgerald said. Since the change to semesters, however, the number of classrooms has been reduced while the number of sections has increased a great deal, so there is higher utilization and greater use in evening hours. Dr. Kvavik suggested the Science Teaching and Student Services building would be a great dual-use facility; 25,000 students walk across the bridge daily and some could come from the nearby resident halls. Mr. Miller reported they have talked about using smaller classrooms for study space, but not classrooms that seat 100 or more students. There are also security issues that need to be addressed. Mr. Fitzgerald commented that there are two pilot active-learning classrooms in use—and they have become favorite study spaces for students when not being used for classes. Dr. Kvavik commented that because classrooms can be made available as study space, that is another argument for OCM to manage all of these spaces.

Professor Martin thanked the guests for the report.

3. Update on Light-Rail Transit

The Committee voted to close the meeting so that Vice President O'Brien could provide an update on the light-rail transit/Central Corridor discussions. She and the Committee discussed a number of issues during the 45-minute session.

Professor Martin thanked Vice President O'Brien for her report, thanked Ms. Blixt for her service on the Committee, and adjourned the meeting at 4:40.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota